

II. Standard Language & Editorial Guidelines

Standard Language

Funding

As a program for the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) under Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's Administration, please include the following standardized language in all media materials developed in support of your OTS program:

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the Business, Transportation & Housing Agency.

Editorial Guidelines

Campaign messages are the direct link to your target audience and should always be well written. The Associated Press Stylebook is a good resource to use when writing for the media. This guide can be found in any bookstore. Also, the specific guidelines outlined in this section should be used whenever possible.

Referencing Alcohol and Other Drugs

Many traffic safety campaigns address the dangers of using alcohol and other drugs while driving. When speaking or writing on this hazardous, often deadly, combination, the following language is preferred:

- Use "Alcohol and other drugs" when speaking about drugs, including alcohol (rather than alcohol and drugs). When speaking about alcohol only, the expanded expression is not necessary.
- The abbreviation "AOD" may be used in documents containing heavy reference to the expression "alcohol and other drugs." First spell-out "alcohol and other drugs" and thereafter use the abbreviation AOD as appropriate (e.g. AOD use or AOD abuse prevention).
- Note: "AOD prevention" is not an appropriate use of the abbreviation. Alcohol and other drugs are not preventable; however the use and/or abuse of alcohol and drugs can be prevented (e.g. AOD abuse prevention).
- Watch the use of "illicit" vs. "illegal." An actual drug is either illicit or licit. The use of a drug is either illegal or legal. For example, the purchase or public possession of alcohol, a licit drug, is illegal for underage youth.

- Prevention messages, such as “war on drugs,” are generally not appropriate. It is important to emphasize prevention without using military language which is offensive to many cultures and individuals, and may also be misleading.

Referencing Agencies

- On first reference, spell out “California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS)” and thereafter use only the abbreviation, OTS:

As the holiday season approaches, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and California Highway Patrol (CHP) would like to challenge your readers, and every California motorist, to consider the dangers of drinking and driving.

OTS and CHP urge California residents to do their part to prevent impaired driving this holiday season — by using a designated driver.

- Always spell out “California Business, Transportation & Housing Agency”:

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) is a vital department within the California Business, Transportation & Housing Agency. Since its inception in 1967, OTS has worked with several departments of the Business Transportation & Housing Agency.

Including Titles

- Always include the official title of any individual named or quoted in a press release or other media materials.

EXAMPLE: “The Office of Traffic Safety is committed to improving the quality of life for all Californians by making our roads safe,” said Christopher J. Murphy, Deputy Director, California Office of Traffic Safety.

Using Quotes

- Internal punctuation, such as commas and periods, are placed inside the quotation marks.

EXAMPLE: “The OTS vision is ambitious, yet simple. Our vision is to save lives,” said Christopher J. Murphy, Deputy Director of the California Office of Traffic Safety. “By being results-oriented and a thought-leader in the traffic safety arena, OTS proactively responds to emerging traffic safety issues thereby reducing deaths, injuries and economic costs through innovative and evidence-based programs.”

- Colons and semicolons should be placed outside the quotation marks:

According to Christopher J. Murphy, “Traffic safety permeates every aspect of life in our state”; therefore it is considered a priority in California.

Writing Numbers

- Spell out numbers from one through nine.
- Numbers 10 and above should be written as numerals.

EXAMPLE: Last year, 62 children under six years of age were killed and more than 7,000 were injured.

- Exception: spell out all numbers at the beginning of a sentence (this doesn't apply to dates).

EXAMPLE: Sixty-two children under the age of six were killed, and more than 7,000 were injured, last year.

- Spell out fractions

EXAMPLE: Of the 62 children killed, only one-third were using safety restraints.